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EDNA AND JOHN:

A Romance of Idaho Flat.

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"AMIE AND HENRY LEE," "THE HAPPY
HOME," "ONE WOMAN'S SPHERE,"
"MADGE MORRISON,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

[Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1876, by Mrs. A. J. Dunaway, in the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington City.]

Woman's degraded, helpless position is the weak point of our institutions to-day—a disturbing force everywhere, severing family ties, filling our prisons with the destitute, the blind, our prisons with criminals, our cities with drunkenness and prostitution, our homes with disease and death. [National Centennial Equal Rights Protest.]

CHAPTER IX.

Aunt Judy was so thoroughly annoyed over John Smith's rage and ranting that she was for a while completely cowed.

But when a woman is not the wife or mother of a man; when no special tie of affinity or consanguinity compels her to cringe and fawn through that overweening affection in which many generations of overstimulation has made the sex morbid, it is not possible for an unreasonable and unreasoning son or husband of some other woman to long hold her at a serious disadvantage.

After the first hour of John's revenge had been expended in inflicting tongue-lashes upon the spirit of poor weeping, sick, and wounded Edna, and equally unjustified and unjustifiable whiplashes upon the bodies of the patient, toiling, suffering oxen, Aunt Judy took advantage of a lull in the tempest, sprang from the wagon to the ground—and for a woman of her avowed disposition the effort was not a slight one—and snatching the whip, exclaimed, in tones of defiant authority:

"John Smith, I discharge you from my service, sir! This wagon is mine, and the oxen, the bed, and everything else included."

"Maybe you'd like to claim the wife and baby?" said John, with a sneer.

"I do claim them, John Smith. You have outraged every law of God in your fury, and we are out of the reach of the laws of men, so I propose to protect this sick woman at all hazards."

John hung his head in silence.

"Give me the whip," continued Aunt Judy. "You are not fit to control a cat-eppillar."

John was astounded. Hadn't Aunt Judy always pleaded for him before? And now that she had turned against him, what was he to do? He had mortally offended Hal La Selle, so he could not now go back to seek his assistance and advice. Indeed, that was the last thing he would have been willing to do, anyhow.

"Now, travel!" said Aunt Judy, looking him in the eye with a steady gaze, before which his countenance fell.

John did not know what to do, and as he stood before his fate, hesitating and helpless, his courage all oozed from his tongue and fingers' ends, what should Edna do but, woman-like, declare herself his sworn ally?

There are men, plenty of them, who will scold, ill-treat, and sometimes even whip their own wives, who become virtuously and instantaneously indignant if any other man offers them the slightest incivility; so there are women, plenty of them, who consider themselves fully licensed to speak evil of their own husbands, who will fight for them in an instant if anybody else attempts to coincide with them.

"Aunt Judy," cried Edna, "if you leave John by the roadside, you must leave me, too. Remember you have always told me that I accepted him for better or for worse, and if this isn't the 'worse' part of the bargain, I don't know how to find it."

Possibly this declaration, unexpected as it was, touched John's better nature. The look of innocent injury which he assumed as he said, in a despondent tone, "No, Edna; go with Aunt Judy; it makes no difference what becomes of me!" would have done credit to a star actor.

Edna was in a raging fever, and consequently in no condition to think or act with judgment; yet the hereditary disposition of woman asserted itself fully.

"Help me out of the wagon, John, and lay the baby by me on the sand," she said. "If Aunt Judy discards you, she must remember there are three of us."

Had Edna's wifely fealty but asserted itself yesterday, when Aunt Judy had been pleading for John, the dear old lady would have been thoroughly happy, but now she was entirely disgusted.

"Hear anything of that, old woman?" cried the husband, exultantly. "Maybe you'd like, with all your boasted love for Edna Rutherford, to leave her to starve out here in the wilderness."

"I ought to," replied Aunt Judy. "It would serve her right for being such an idiot. But John, if I do allow you to go on with me, remember you are not to mistreat your wife. She has acted nobly in fleeing from the presence of Hal La Selle. The trouble with you is that you are not capable of appreciating her motives."

"I can't for the life of me see where the nobility of the motives comes in,"

said John, doggedly. "If he had cared a straw for her, she wouldn't give a fig for her integrity. She's acted the fool about him when he didn't care the scratch of a pin for her feelings! It was Sue Randolph he was in love with, and she thought it was herself, the silly goose!"

"I guess you may help her out of the wagon, John! If you and she desire this cat and dog life, with starvation as an added inducement, I know no human law to restrain you. But I will not live in a wrangle, and we will not go a step further together till this thing is settled."

It was well for Edna that the bracing mountain air of Utah and Idaho surrounded her, supplying the fever in her veins with oxygen to keep her blood from consuming, else she would not have lived to continue her journey and fight her battle of existence longer.

She closed her eyes in an agony of humiliation and shame. Yes, it was true, too true; she had given her love, unsought and undesired, to Hal La Selle. She did not stop to consider how much her own volition had or had not to do with the matter; she only felt the bitter, mortifying truth. And as she lay in helpless agony upon the way-worn, travel-soiled bed, and clasped her newborn infant to her breast, her bitter self-condemnation, whether it were wise or unwise, might well have made an angel weep.

John looked at the helpless young mother, as her tears watered the pillow, and a spasm of tenderness overcame his sordid, narrow soul.

"Aunt Judy, what say you? Suppose we bury the hatchet! Suppose we own up that we've all been too hasty and acted like idiots."

"I couldn't say it so far as Edna and I are concerned," was the calm reply.

"Then say it, so far as I'm concerned, and let it go! I don't see what we are to gain by continuing this quarrel."

"Then," said Aunt Judy, "will you let bygones be bygones? Will you forget your imaginary grievances and prize your wife all the more highly because you find that she is ready, even in the hour of her greatest weakness, to choose self-abnegation rather than possible dishonor?"

"I didn't think of that before, Aunt Judy. She is a jewel, and no mistake. Shall we stop quarreling and proceed to Idaho?"

"That seems to be the plan."

"Then take your seat in the wagon, auntie. We've up-hill work before us for many days and nights yet."

And up-hill work indeed they had. The country was new and the roads almost wholly unmade. The trails of Indians, though very good for Cayuse ponies, formed often a precarious footing for the oxen and a doubly dangerous bed for the wagon wheels. The mountains were high and the streams rapid; the plains were sandy, and to all appearances, sterile; and the wild and strange monotony of their journey was varied only by long trains of pack mules loaded with supplies for mountain miners.

Great phantom-like frame works spread their skeleton arms high in the air, bearing aloft mighty streams of water for hydraulic mines, carrying the precious fluid across ravines and gulches and down into the fastnesses of the gloomy forests, where beds of golden sands lay hidden. The great desert-like valley stretching afar and near in all directions with its ash-colored verdure of sage brush, through which wild rabbits roamed; the tortuous Snake and winding Boise Rivers, running like silver ribbon through the distant plain; the mountains, abounding in verdant grasses and gorgeous with floral beauty; the solitary stage making its daily journey through the arid plain, were all great helps to Edna as she lay in the wagon fighting her own battle, and resolving, with what heroism none who has not been the tried can know, that she would conquer her destiny and live according to her highest convictions of right, regardless of her own happiness.

The days and weeks wore on, and the long journey was near its close.

A recent mining excitement had broken out among the men who were digging for gold in myriads in another part of the Territory, and the crowd was now assembled at Idaho Flat.

Let no one who reads these pages ever act so insanely as to attempt to find the geographical locality which we have thus designated. Should he attempt it, he will surely fail, for the name is given thus on purpose to mislead him. The place was not a flat at all, but the exact reverse. It is a romance of real life that we are chronicling, however, and we expect you to studiously avoid being too inquisitive or critical about localities, identities, or even facts. Not that we would mislead you about these last. Indeed, the only object (aside from peculiar reasons) that would induce us thus to write at all, is that we may lay facts before you; facts as parables; facts as lessons; facts as they are in the every-day life of more than one woman who pursues the allotted rounds of a life of heroic effort, combining the heroism of a general with the wisdom of a statesman, the toll of a bondswoman with the self-abnegation of a martyr, and the conscientiousness of a Christian with the lie-living existence of a hypocrite.

You may not be pleased at the picture, reader. We are not writing to please, but to instruct you; not to tickle your imagination, but to set you to thinking.

To prevent the unpleasant results of the possible identification of the real actors in this interesting drama, we purposely call places by fictitious names, and assign our characters to localities that do not exist. Now hearken:

Idaho Flat was a rocky gulch, upon whose precipitous sides a few men had discovered paying "prospects" in the early spring. A mountain stream, which we shall call John's River after the fashion of the country, though it was not a river at all, being nothing but a rapid-running creek that lost itself in summer in a tributary to a larger stream that disgorged somewhere, five or six hundred miles below, into the current of the Columbia, and overflowed its banks in the early spring when the melting snows were seeking the sea level. John's River gave a very meager supply of water for mining purposes at the season of the advent of Edna and John, but men were working like bees, in both effort and numbers, in getting the "pay dirt" excavated to make ready for the autumn rains. Cabins, of unique design and Lilliputian proportions, were perched here and there upon knolls; tents that had once been white, but had long revealed in the creamy color of the mountain dust, were planted here and there; pack mules, loaded with their burdens, stretched themselves lazily upon the hillsides; men in gum boots and gray flannel waded in the river bed; "saloon" and provision stores nestled together under the lee of some blasted pine, and a "faro bank" stood ominously near the camp where Aunt Judy decided to pitch her tent.

Edna was now well and tolerably strong. The baby Idaho proved an obliging immigrant, who slept almost constantly, and there seemed nothing to hinder Edna, who, except Aunt Judy, was the only woman in the Flat, from building up a little fortune from the proceeds of her own labor.

Years after, when she had learned by bitter experience the folly of building fortunes over which she was allowed no control, she saw the folly of her young ambition, but the wisdom came too late to furnish her material aid.

John very soon struck a bargain with a logger and arranged to haul timber with the jaded team of Aunt Judy from the adjacent mountains.

A cabin had just been vacated on a knoll hard by, of which the women took possession, and they were soon domiciled therein in apparent comfort.

"I'll die here!" said Edna, after the first day of comparative inaction in the cabin. "I must do something to keep up the excitement. Suppose I turn pastry cook."

"Take my advice, Edna, and depend on John for a livelihood. He's not over ambitious, as you know, and whenever you begin to take other burdens on yourself than the care of your household and family, he'll begin to lop and lean, and you'll have the bag to hold."

"Nonsense, Aunt Judy! You're perfectly absurd. John will go on with his work and I with mine. He'll have his funds and I'll have mine. Times are good and gold is plenty. These miners are starving for a woman's cooking. Every one of 'em has been brought up by mothers and sisters, and when I display my pies and bread and doughnuts, they'll buy in quantities. We'll get rich after a year or two, and then won't I go home and show Squire Rutherford whether or not he can lord it over me?"

"I'd like to know what you are going to get to cook out here, and what arrangements you are going to make to cook it," said Aunt Judy.

"I'll build me a mud oven, and I'll make dried apple pies, auntie. Of course we wouldn't eat 'em at home, where we had everything else we wanted, but these miners will devour them by the wholesale."

To make the "mud oven" was anything but the romantic work that Edna had planned in the boarding school. The first attempt was a total failure. After a vast amount of mortar-mixing, that caused her hands to clasp and bleed and her temper to exhibit none of the mildest of its phases, the mass of mud and rock was shaped into a sort of hollow dome, which was filled with combustibles and fired. The heat was too strong and too sudden, and the unwieldy mass cracked wide open, still further taxing Edna's temper, and causing several days' delay. Then the experiment of firing the oven was repeated, but with greater skill, and the first dozen of tempting, crispy pies were exhibited upon a rough table covered with old newspapers brought a price that well repaid the tired caterer for all her trouble.

For a few weeks all went well. Then a drizzling rain made logging in the mountains difficult, and John Smith lounged for a day or two around the cabin, watching Edna's financial exploit with evident relish. Then he began to sell pies and pocket the change. Edna did not remonstrate. She had never intended to have interests separate from her husband, and was very glad to see him interested in her work.

After a while winter came and the oxen were pastured in a neighboring valley. Edna had brought her husband's law books from her former home, and one of the bitterest disappointments

of her life lay in the fact that it was impossible to prevail upon him to pursue their study.

The saloon and faro table had by possessed attractions which he fully appreciated, and often during that first trying winter of Edna's life in Idaho Flat, did the poor young mother listen in vain till the wee, small hours of the morning for the return of her husband from the haunts of vice, where the fascination of gambling became his evil genius.

(To be continued.)

Peculiarities of Horse-Car Travel.

Yesterday afternoon a man dressed in good clothes, an eye-glass and a gold-mounted cane, and possessing altogether a rather clerical appearance, hailed a Newark avenue car. There was nothing unusual or particularly noticeable with which he commanded a halt, and the desperate effort which he made to maintain his center of gravity as he passed to the car, and revealed the fact that he was slightly inebriated. Arriving at the door he solemnly raised his right foot to enter, but not raising it quite high enough, he fell headlong on the floor of the car. Raising himself up with some difficulty, he cast a severely reproving look at the old gentleman sitting near the door, and said:

"Sir, what do you lift this car for just as I was going to get in?"

"My dear sir, I didn't lift the car," replied the old gentleman, meekly.

"Well, perhaps you didn't. I won't attempt to argue with a man in your condition. My amiable friend, it is my own and deliberate opinion you've been looking upon the wine when it was red. Very sorry to see it in a man of your age. What'd's pose your mother would say should she see you intoxicated?"

My friend, I have shed many bitter tears over such cases as yours. Yes, yes, I am a fathering voice, and pulling out his handkerchief, "I'm weeping now, as you readily observe."

Whereupon he wiped his eyes with a grand flourish, blew his nose and navigated to the other end of the car.

When he reached his destination he pulled the bell strap and started for the door. When he got about half way, and just as he was in front of a lady, he tripped and fell at full length on the floor. Raising himself to a perpendicular, he turned to the lady, and in a tone of mingled severity and whisky said:

"Madame, you've certainly stepped on the biggest feet I ever saw in my life."

"Oh, don't apologise, madam. I beg you not to apologise. You're not to blame for it. But if you would permit me to help you up, I'll be glad to do so."

The lady was speechless with indignation, the passengers were convulsed, and the gentleman stalked majestically out to the door, stepped to the ground, and immediately sat down. As the car moved on, he looked up and down the street, waved his hand in an uncertain manner, and walked away.

To YOUNG LADIES.—The pastor of a church in one of our largest cities said to me not long ago: "I have officiated at forty weddings since I came here, and I tell you by one conversation with the facts, is stranger than we have already narrated. When the cholera was raging in our city in 1856, the second wife was taken very ill with it, and being informed by the physician that she could not live but a few hours at most, she told me, by one conversation, with the facts, is stranger than we have already narrated. When the cholera was raging in our city in 1856, the second wife was taken very ill with it, and being informed by the physician that she could not live but a few hours at most, she told me, by one conversation, with the facts, is stranger than we have already narrated. 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